

VZCZCXR07787
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #1361/01 2101456
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281456Z JUL 08
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHJC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2295
INFO RUEHJK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001361

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2018

TAGS: KWBG PTER PGOV ASEC IS

SUBJECT: HAMAS LASHES OUT AT FATAH AFTER GAZA CITY BOMBING
KILLS 5 AL-QASSAM BRIGADES MILITANTS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Hamas spokesman and local press reported that a bomb killed five Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades militants, including a senior al-Qassam commander and nephew of Hamas leader/PLC member Khalil al-Hayya late July 25. Fatah PLC bloc leader Azzam al-Ahmad told al-Jazira TV July 26 that internal Hamas conflicts led to the bombing, and Fatah had nothing to do with any of the attacks. PA President Abbas told press July 26 that he regretted the bombing and offered condolences to the victims. He urged Hamas to accept his offer for immediate national dialogue in Cairo. Hamas leaders told local media and crowds at funeral processions that Fatah was to blame for the attacks. Senior Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri dismissed President Abbas' expressions of regret for the bombing victims as "meaningless," rejected Abbas' call for national dialogue as "an attempt to divert attention from the bombing" and said Fatah and Palestine TV "are celebrating the massacre, leaving no doubt as to who the guilty are." Hamas gunmen raided and forcibly closed or confiscated equipment/documents from at least 45 NGO offices July 26-28, and arrested/kidnapped at least 170 Fatah members. End summary.

Bombing Kills 6, Including Senior
al-Qassam Brigades Commander

¶2. (SBU) Hamas spokesman and local press reported that a bomb detonated underneath a parked car in Gaza City late July 25, killing five Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades militants, including senior al-Qassam commander Nidal Hussayn Masabih and Iyad al-Hayya (nephew of Hamas leader/PLC member Khalil al-Hayya) and a 4-year-old girl, Sirin al-Safadi. 21 others were injured in the blast. The bombing followed two explosions in Gaza City earlier July 25, one near Hamas PLC member Marwan Abu Ras' home (no injuries), and an attempted attack on al-Jazira Cafe, in which the bomber, associated with the Dughmush clan and Army of Islam, was killed when explosives he carried detonated prematurely.

PA/Fatah Point to Hamas Infighting and Security
Failures, Hamas Blames Fatah for Attacks

¶3. (SBU) PA President Abbas told press in Cairo July 26 that he regretted the bombing and offered condolences to the victims. He urged Hamas to accept his offer for immediate national dialogue in Cairo. Fatah PLC bloc leader Azzam al-Ahmad told al-Jazira TV July 26 that internal Hamas conflicts led to the bombing, and Fatah had nothing to do with any of the attacks. Al-Ahmad said Hamas has used the bombings as a pretext to arrest Fatah leaders and avoid President Abbas' call for national dialogue. Fatah leader Fahmi al-Za'arir told press that Hamas was responsible for the bombings and is attempting to cover up their involvement,

and that Hamas is cracking down on Fatah activists "just like crackdowns which have been launched by Israel against Fatah in the past."

¶4. (SBU) Hamas leaders told local media and crowds at funeral processions that Fatah was to blame for the attacks. Senior Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri dismissed President Abbas' expressions of regret for the bombing victims as "meaningless," rejected Abbas' call for national dialogue as "an attempt to divert attention from the bombing" and said Fatah and Palestine TV "are celebrating the massacre, leaving no doubt as to who the guilty are." Khalil al-Hayya told Hamas-affiliated al-Aqsa TV on July 26 that those responsible for the blasts "claim affiliation with Fatah and the black Muqata'a (President Abbas' government headquarters in Ramallah), who say that the explosions resulted from internal Hamas disputes, clearly and without mistake proving that Fatah is behind the attacks. Or people affiliated with Fatah." Mahmud al-Zahar told funeral mourners that Hamas will have "no mercy or compassion for the criminals who perpetrated the bombing, even if we must eliminate these groups by law, so they spend the rest of their lives in jail or are given the death penalty." Islam Shahwan, spokesman for Hamas security, told press that explosives seized from Fatah activists on July 26-27 were the same type used near Hamas PLC member Marwan Abu Ras' home, and both the Abu Ras and al-Qassam Brigades attacks were part of a Fatah plot to sow chaos in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas Arrest Over 170 Fatah Activists,
Closes NGOs Suspected of Fatah/PLO Ties

JERUSALEM 00001361 002 OF 002

¶5. (SBU) Hamas gunmen raided and forcibly closed or confiscated equipment/documents from at least 45 NGO offices July 26-28, according to NGO and press reporting. While many of the NGOs were affiliated with Fatah or PLO leaders, several had no factional affiliation. Hamas also closed PA Governorate offices in Rafah, Dayr al-Balah and Khan Yunis.

¶6. (SBU) Fatah contacts and local press report that at least 170 Fatah members have been arrested or kidnapped by Hamas security and gunmen since July 26. Senior Fatah leaders Zakariya al-Agha, Ibrahim Abu Naja and Ahmad Hillis were detained and questioned by Hamas security officials and had their houses and offices searched, according to Fatah contacts.

Al-Aqsa Brigades: We Will Act Against
Hamas in West Bank if Gaza Arrests Continue

¶7. (SBU) Spokesmen for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades threatened July 26-27 to take action against Hamas members in the West Bank if Hamas does not immediately halt arrests and attacks against Fatah members in Gaza. Brigades spokesman Abu Mahmud said the Friday bombings were the result of infighting in Hamas' military wing, and the al-Aqsa Brigades will take action against Hamas to retaliate for mistreatment of Fatah members in Gaza "based on false accusations of Fatah responsibility."

Army of Islam Clashes with Hamas Security

¶8. (SBU) Gaza-based press and Hamas spokesman report one Hamas policeman and five Army of Islam gunmen were injured in July 27 gunbattles in southern Gaza City. The Hamas police/Executive Force reported arresting two Army of Islam fighters in the incident.

Comment

¶9. (C) There are two competing explanations for the origin of this latest round of violence: a) an attack by Fatah-affiliated elements against Hamas, or b) internal clashes between Hamas sub-factions, or between Hamas and the Army of Islam (led by the Dughmush clan). An attack by Fatah against Hamas would require a level of operational planning that Fatah has not exhibited in Gaza since the Hamas takeover in June 2007. Fatah's motivation for such an attack at this time is also unclear, and the Hamas response has clearly hurt what is left of Fatah in Gaza. The intra-Islamist explanation seems more plausible, as there have been indications recently of rivalries within Hamas, and possible defections of disgruntled Hamas members to the Army of Islam. In either case, Hamas has taken advantage of the situation to further solidify its hold on Gaza and stifle organized opposition from any quarter.

WALLES